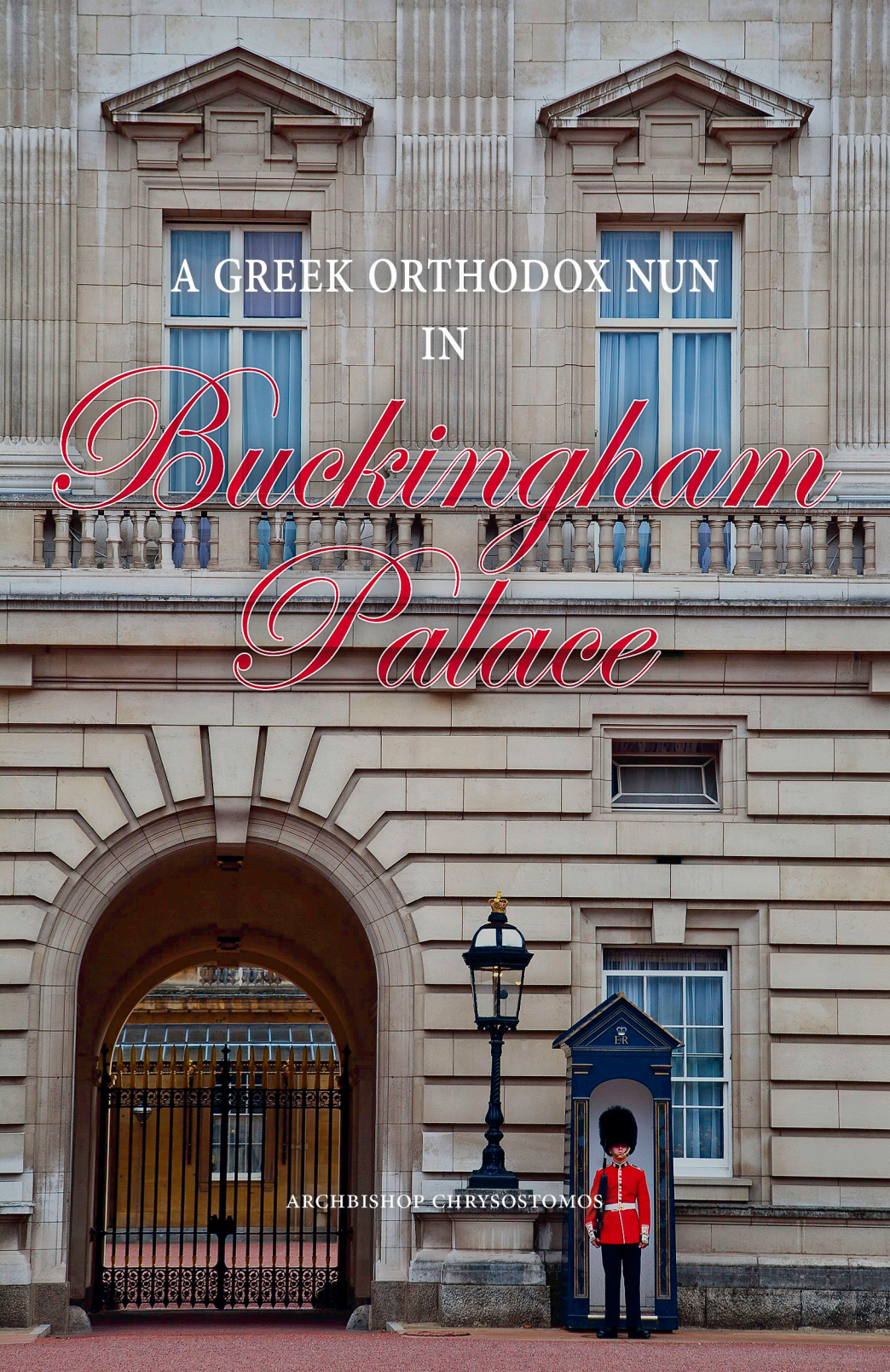


A GREEK ORTHODOX NUN
IN

*Buckingham
Palace*

ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS



**A Greek Orthodox Nun in
Buckingham Palace**

MONOGRAPHIC SUPPLEMENT SERIES
NUMBER XLVII

A Greek Orthodox Nun in Buckingham Palace



*Mother Superior Alice-Elizabeth,
Princess of Battenberg and Mother-in-Law
of Queen Elizabeth II*

Archbishop Chrysostomos



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A tree planted in Jerusalem at Yad Vashem's "Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations," honoring Mother Alice-Elizabeth (Princess Alice of Battenberg) for her heroism in confronting anti-Semitism during the German occupation of Greece in the Second World War.

“We did not know, and, as far as we know, she never mentioned to anyone, that she had given refuge to the Cohen family at a time when all Jews throughout Greece were in great danger of being arrested and transported to the concentration camps. ...In retrospect, this reticence may seem strange, but I suspect that it never occurred to her that her action was in any way special. ...She was a person with a deep religious faith and she would have considered it to be a perfectly natural human reaction to fellow beings in distress.”

Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, husband of Queen Elizabeth II of England. From comments made in a ceremony at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel's official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust, when his mother, Princess Alice (Mother Alice-Elizabeth), was enrolled among the "Righteous of the Nations" for heroically protecting a Jewish family in Nazi-occupied Greece.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Archbishop Chrysostomos received multiple undergraduate and graduate degrees in history and psychology at the University of California, the California State University, and Princeton University, where he earned his doctoral degree and taught as a preceptor. He holds a Licentiate in Theology from the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.

His Eminence has held professorial posts at the University of California, Ashland University, Ashland Theological Seminary, the Theological Institute of the University of Uppsala, and, as a Fulbright Scholar, at the University of Bucharest, the University of Iași, and the Ioan Minicu University.

The author of twenty books, numerous Patristic translations, and sixty articles in various academic journals, he has been a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard Divinity School, Pembroke College (Oxford), the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, and the University of Washington, Seattle.

In 2006, His Eminence was the David B. Larson Fellow in Health and Spirituality at the Kluge Center of the United States Library of Congress and was formerly Executive Director of the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania for the U.S. Department of State.

For Mother Alice-Elizabeth, whose spiritual quest, religious dedication, and person have so often been harshly assessed and evaluated, and thus inadequately appreciated. May this modest attempt fairly to portray her noble struggle inspire others to take courage in their own striving in illness and infirmity and to pay proper homage to an extraordinary seeker.

Introduction

During the last two years, I have written three consecutive monographs for the Monographic Supplement Series of *Orthodox Tradition*, the triannual journal of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.¹ All three centered on very different non-Orthodox cultural and religious figures: a brilliant Spanish Scholastic theologian and controversial Superior General of the Jesuit Order; a celebrated but eccentric American poet; and a famous Spanish Basque genius, existentialist philosopher, and religious writer. In each instance, my purpose was to examine those religious sensitivities and mystical inclinations of each of these individuals that I considered compatible with the theological and spiritual traditions of the Orthodox Church. The present monograph, the forty-seventh in the series and my seventh contribution to it, is not *per se* a companion work to these first three monographs. However, in recounting the life and witness of Mother Alice-Elizabeth (Princess Alice), I am nonetheless in many ways continuing the thread of examining Orthodoxy as its truths emerge from, or express themselves in, non-Orthodox cultures and contexts.

After all, though an Orthodox nun, Princess Alice was also a westerner and, as was the case with many of the

¹ See Numbers XLIV, XLV, and XLVI in the series, respectively: *Father General Thyrsus González de Santalla, S.J.: Theologian, Philosopher, and Superior General of the Society of Jesus* (2012); *Miss Emily's Fire: The Orthodox Elements in Emily Dickinson's Spirituality and Mysticism* (2012, in two printings); and *Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo: Spanish Basque Genius, Educator, Writer, and Philosopher* (2013).



Princess Alice of Battenberg

Mother Superior Alice-Elizabeth

The woman who was destined to become the mother-in-law of the most famous monarch in the contemporary world, Queen Elizabeth II of England; whose son, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has been married to the British Queen for more than six decades; and who lived out her last years in seclusion at Buckingham Palace, was the daughter of Princess Victoria of the German Royal House of Hesse (†1950), a granddaughter—indeed, the favorite granddaughter—of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of England. Her father was Prince Louis von Battenberg (†1921), son of Prince Alexander of Hesse and Princess Julia von Battenberg.¹ (Her parents were first cousins once removed.) In addition to Princess Alice, they had three other children: Louise, Queen Consort of King Gustav VI of Sweden; George, 2nd Marquess of Milford Haven, who married the Russian Romanov Countess Nadezhda Mikhailovna de Torby; and Louis, Earl of Burma. Among their many relatives were the members of almost every European royal house in countries from Austria to Spain.²

¹ During World War I, because of anti-German sentiments in England, the name “Mountbatten,” an English rendering of the German name “Battenberg,” was adopted by Princess Victoria and her husband, who were also given English titles: Louis, that of Marquess of Milford Haven and Earl of Medina and Viscount of Alderney, Victoria, that of Marchioness of Milford Haven.

² It was the marriage, in 1840, of the “Father and Mother of Europe,” Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, first cousins, that initiated a series of marriages, largely among their nine children and their chil-

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(Belmont, MA, Institute for Byzantine and
Modern Greek Studies, 2010)

•
Τέσσαρα Κείμενα ἐπὶ Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Θεμάτων
(2011, in Greek)*

•
The Evergetinos: A Complete Text (in 4 vols.)
with Hieromonk Patapios *et al.*
(2008, translated from the Greek)*

•
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with Hieromonk Patapios
(Oxford, Peter Lang, 2006)

•
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•
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(Brookline, MA, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1980)

* Available from the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.

A Greek Orthodox Nun in Buckingham Palace

My narrative of the life of Mother Alice-Elizabeth is of course informed by a number of published books and articles about her or her family that I have carefully read and studied. My selective presentation and arrangement of such material, however, has been shaped by information and impressions collected from those who either knew her or her intimates and who appreciated her spiritual pursuits. This is seldom the case with the little that has been written about her. Indeed, biases and prejudices of various kinds, as well as political considerations, have long colored public perceptions of the Princess, and especially *qua* nun.

—*From the Introduction*

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